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ENG 3701-002: American Romanticism

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English 3701 – 002: **AMERICAN ROMANTICISM**

Purpose: As stated in the General Catalog, English 3701 focuses on American works produced from about 1830-1860. The period comprises what F.O. Matthiessen called the “American Renaissance,” a time of extraordinary literary expression from the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman. Because the period had a long foregrounding in the earlier writings of the age, we will also examine the literature that preceded the 1830’s. Such an approach will allow us to see the larger context in which the major figures responded so powerfully to an earlier outcry for American literary nationalism. Among the themes we will touch on during the semester are the significance of “NATURE,” the centrality of the individual, the importance of creative imagination, the image and function of the noble savage, the uses of gothic artifice, the promises and dangers of American democracy, and the intellectual and cultural undercurrents that began to erode Romantic idealism – the whole Romantic movement. We will study the literature not only to increase our appreciation for its aesthetic merits but also to consider its abiding relevance to our society.

Scope: During the semester you will read a wide range of essays, stories, novels (“romances”), works of personal record, and poems. Your performance will be evaluated by means of a final essay examination, a series of written responses, and a critical essay of at least eight pages, not including “Notes” and “Works Cited.” The final will include two parts. Part I will require you to write two paragraph-length responses (at least 250 words each) based on two of four items; Part II will require you to write an essay (at least 600 words) based on one of three items. During the semester, you will write six responses (at least 250 words each) about topics and questions that I will pose in class, usually at the beginning of class. These responses must be supported by reasoning and evidence, including quoted evidence. In addition, you will prepare a typewritten critical essay of 8-10 pages of argument. In your critical essay, which you must hand in by April 22, you will provide an extended answer to a critical question about a range of poems, a range of stories, and/or a major work. I will hand out “Guidelines” to provide additional information concerning your critical essay.

Components of the Grade

- Final (25%):
- Six Written Responses of at Least 250 Words Each (30%)
- Critical Essay of 8-10 Pages of Argument (45%)

Grading: When I evaluate written work for your final examination and critical essay, I consider content, coherence, grammar, and mechanics. By content I mean a relationship between purpose, reasoning, and evidence. By coherence I mean an orderly unfolding of ideas and evidence in your argument, as well as smooth transitions and clear language. By grammar I mean the use of standard English rules and syntax in the construction of sentences. And by mechanics I mean standard punctuation. Of course, content is most important, but a written performance, especially the critical essay, can receive a low grade, even a failing grade, if it is radically incoherent or riddled with errors of grammar and/or mechanics.

Missed Work: If you miss a response, you will not be permitted to make it up. However, if you have an excused absence, I will not count the response in your average. Should you miss a major examination, you may take a make-up examination only if you have an excused absence. **Note:** An excused absence requires a confirmation from the Health Service, a university official, or a medical doctor. I expect you to turn in your critical essay on time. If you fail to do so, your essay will pay a five-point penalty for each of the first two days. After two days, I will not accept the essay.

Absence Policy: Class attendance is important. During class, I will often provide information about literary history, theory, and criticism – information that you should learn in a course about American Romanticism. Moreover, your participation in discussion and questioning, even as a listener, is an important learning experience that distinguishes classroom education from correspondence school and self-education. For these reasons and others, your grade will be deducted 10% after three unexcused absences and 5% for each unexcused absence thereafter. For an excused absence, you must provide verification from the Health Service, a physician, or an appropriate member of Eastern's faculty or staff.

Students With Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

1. Week of January 8
 - Introduction to Course; Handout: "Rising Glory" Poem
 - Lecture: The Literary-Historical Context
 - Freneau's "The Power of Fancy" (547-51),
"The Wild Honey Suckle" (554), "The Hurricane" (551-52) "The Indian Burying
Ground" (554-55)
2. Week of January 15
 - Irving, "the Author's Account of Himself" (617-18), "Rip Van Winkle" (679-32)
 - Bryant, "Thanotopsis" (712-13), "A Forest Hymn" (716-18), "The Prairies" (719-22)
 - Cooper, The Last of the Mohicans ("Author's Introduction" and Chapters I through V)
3. Week of January 22
 - King's Birthday: No Classes
 - The Last of the Mohicans (Chapters VI-XII, XVI-XIX)
 - The Last of the Mohicans (Chapters XXI-XXII, XXIV, XXVI-XXIX)
4. Week of January 28
 - The Last of the Mohicans (XXX-XXXIII)
 - Emerson, from Nature (811-816, 821-24)
 - "The American Scholar" (841-54)
5. Week of February 4
 - Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (866-883)
 - Thoreau, from Walden (1339-83)
 - Lincoln's Birthday: No Classes
6. Week of February 11
 - from Walden (1383-93)
 - from Walden (1431-68)
 - from Walden (1500-1519)
7. February 18
 - Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century (5-28, 41-71, 90-91)
 - Hawthorne, "The Minister's Black Veil" (922-24, 956-64)
 - Hawthorne, "The Birthmark" (965-76)

8. Week of February 25
--The Scarlet Letter (1028-79)
-- The Scarlet Letter (1079-1102)
--The Scarlet Letter (1102-25)
9. Week of March 4
-- The Scarlet Letter (1125-46)
--The Blithedale Romance (27-63)
--The Blithedale Romance (63-102)

SPRING RECESS

10. Week of March 18

--The Blithedale Romance (102-91)
--The Blithedale Romance (191-251)
--Poe, "Sonnet—To Science" (723-25, 726), "To Helen" (726-27),
"Israfel" (927-28), "Ulalume—A Ballad" (734-37), "Annabel Lee" (737-38)
11. Week of March 25
--"The Raven" (731-34), "The Philosophy of Composition" (797-806)
--"The Fall of the House of Usher" (763-777)
--"The Purloined Letter" (780-93)
12. Week of April 1
--Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1146-74)
--"Benito Cereno" (1174-1200)
--"Benito Cereno" (1201-1233)
13. Week of April 8
--"The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" (1233-49)
--*Billy Budd, Sailor* (1250-1279)
--*Billy Budd, Sailor* (1279-1308)
14. Week of April 15
--Whitman, "Preface" to Leaves (2019-32)
--"Song of Myself" (2036-52)
--"Song of Myself" (2052-2083)
15. Week of April 22
--Critical Essays Due
--"Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" (2094-2099), "The Wound-Dresser" (2106-2108)
--Student Evaluations; Examination Topics